



Media Release

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NEW SCHEME TO MAKE CANTERBURY FAMILIES HEALTHY

A major new home insulation and heating programme has been launched in Canterbury, seeking to secure up to \$5 million in funding to warm up, and make energy efficient, thousands of cold and damp homes.

“The Warm Families project aims to bring together a range of partners to improve the health and wellness of low-income Canterbury families. It will turn their damp, cold homes into energy efficient, warm, dry and healthy homes,” says Jane Cartwright, Chief Executive of Partnership Health Canterbury, a key project partner.

“The focus is on helping low-income Cantabrians to lead warmer, healthier lives by installing insulation and energy-efficient heating in their homes. This will provide health benefits to families and people with identified health issues likely to be made worse by under-heated homes.

“This is Canterbury’s largest community project focused on warming up homes to tackle ill health. The provision of insulation and energy efficient heating in homes is essential to deal with the illnesses associated with harsh Canterbury winters,” Ms Cartwright says.

Organisations involved include the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA), local lines companies Orion and MainPower, power retailer Meridian Energy, the Canterbury District Health Board, Partnership Health Canterbury, Environment Canterbury, Community Energy Action and the Christchurch City Council. Other organisations and supporters are likely to join the project as it grows.

“EECA is a major funder and supporter of Warm Families. We are really excited about this project as it will provide free improvements to those with the greatest health needs,” says Mike Underhill, Chief Executive of EECA.



community energy action
charitable trust





Warm Families has secured about \$250,000 in local funding for this financial year. Combined with EECA funding, Warm Families will spend more than \$1 million on insulation and heating this year to June 2009 – enough to retrofit more than 400 homes. The Warm Families project aim is to be spending \$5 million per year by 2010. This would retrofit more than 2,000 homes a year.

The retrofitting (upgrading of existing houses) programme is scheduled to begin in January 2009 with a pilot programme of 100 homes of children with asthma, referred by their GP.

“Warming up Canterbury families’ homes will bring numerous health benefits, which will flow through to a reduced need for hospital admissions and reduced medical costs for community members and local health organisations,” Ms Cartwright says.

New Zealand research has already shown warmer homes can significantly reduce respiratory illnesses and have an overall positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. International research has similar findings.

The Warm Families programme will initially focus on those considered most at risk – people eligible for the flu vaccine, people over 65, people with a chronic health condition, children under 12 with respiratory illness, and community service card holders. Eligible participants are referred to the project via their GP.

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Warm Families: the facts

Warm Families is a Canterbury community project which will improve the health and wellness of low-income families and individuals by turning their damp, cold homes into energy efficient, warm, dry and healthy homes.

What makes Warm Families different from other insulation projects?

Warm Families aims to bring together key Canterbury organisations in the energy, environmental and health sectors, to jointly tackle a long-standing Canterbury problem – cold, damp homes. By working together we can improve the lives of a greater number of low-income Cantabrians and create healthy, sustainable indoor living conditions.

Our combined efforts, alongside tremendous support from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority, have made this Canterbury's largest community project focused on tackling ill health by improving home living conditions.

Most previous initiatives tackling cold homes in New Zealand have focused solely on insulation. Warm Families will not only upgrade insulation in homes but will also upgrade heating. We will install a clean, efficient heater in the home's living area if one doesn't already exist.

Warm Families targets low-income households where an occupant either suffers from a chronic health condition or is over 65 years old. By turning their damp, cold homes into energy efficient, warm, dry and healthy homes, we can enhance people's health and in turn improve their lives.

How big is Warm Families?

Given the clear benefits of Warm Families to the Canterbury community, a number of key Canterbury organisations have been quick to get behind the project. Nine organisations have expressed strong interest in participating in and funding the project, and we expect the size of the project to grow over time.

Warm Families has secured about \$250,000 in local funding for this financial year. Combined with EECA funding, Warm Families will spend more than \$1 million on insulation and heating this year to June 2009. After that, we anticipate even more will be spent, with an aim to spend up to \$5 million per year installing insulation and efficient heating in the homes of low-income Cantabrians who suffer illness.

The Warm Families project will result in improved warmth in more than 2,000 homes and help up to 10,000 people lead warmer, healthier lives.

What homes and people will be targeted to benefit from Warm Families?

We will initially focus on those people whose health will improve the most from a warmer, drier home. This includes people who are eligible for a flu vaccine – i.e. those who are either over 65 or who suffer from a chronic health condition. Community service card holders will also be some of the first people to benefit from Warm Families.

Warm Families has established a pilot project of 100 homes where a child under twelve suffers from a chronic respiratory condition. As the project increases in size, we will widen the range of homes eligible to participate in the project.



How did Warm Families start?

Warm Families was borne from an initiative started by electricity lines companies MainPower and Orion, the Canterbury District Health Board, and the Community Energy Action Charitable Trust, who sought to insulate the homes of 100 children suffering from asthma. Other organisations have since signalled their interest, including the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority which is providing crucial government funding assistance.

What health benefits result from a warm home?

Two studies by the Wellington School of Medicine & Health Sciences^{1,2} have shown that installing insulation in New Zealand can significantly reduce respiratory illnesses and have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. People living in warmer homes require less GP visits, tend to have fewer hospital admissions and less sick days off school and work. International research has also concluded similar findings.

How will homes and people be selected to participate?

Canterbury primary health organisations (PHOs) will work with their local GPs to identify community service card holders who are eligible for the free flu vaccine, i.e. those who are either over 65 or who suffer from a chronic medical condition. Their homes will then be assessed to see if insulation and heating levels can be improved, and if so these people will become eligible for the project.

Analysis of flu vaccine data indicates that several thousand households could benefit from insulation and heating, however the criteria can be widened if funding is available to insulate more homes.

What areas of Canterbury will be targeted?

The project will initially focus on Christchurch and North Canterbury. As Warm Families develops over time, other Canterbury areas will be added.

Who is involved in Warm Families?

The following organisations have expressed an interest in the project: Energy Efficiency Conservation Authority, Canterbury District Health Board, Christchurch City Council, Community Energy Action, Environment Canterbury, MainPower, Meridian Energy, Orion, and Partnership Health Canterbury.

Other local organisations will also be approached as the project develops.



¹ Effect of insulating existing homes on health inequality: cluster randomised study in the community. Howden-Chapman P, Matheson A, Crane J et al BMJ 2007;334: 460

² Howden-Chapman P, et al. Effects of improved home heating on asthma in community dwelling children: randomized controlled trial., BMJ 2008; 337; a1411



Warm Families: who's involved?

Agreed partners for the 2008/09 financial year:

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA)

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) is a Crown entity which promotes sustainable energy by changing the way New Zealanders think about and use energy. EECA works to raise community awareness of energy efficiency and renewable energy issues and provides businesses and individuals with the tools to make changes.

EECA develops programmes to meet the needs of specific markets, often working in partnership with other organisations.

Canterbury District Health Board

Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB) is the main funder and provider of health services for the Canterbury region. Its vision is to promote, enhance and facilitate the health and well-being of the people of Canterbury.

The statutory objectives of the CDHB are to improve, promote and protect the health of communities; to promote the integration of health services, especially primary and secondary care services, and to promote effective care or support of those in need of personal health services or disability support.

MainPower

MainPower New Zealand Limited owns and operates the electricity distribution system throughout the North Canterbury and Kaikoura regions and supplies line services to approximately 32,000 customers.

MainPower has been providing electricity-related services to the region for more than 80 years and is the largest community and customer owned company in the North Canterbury/Kaikoura region. The company supports energy efficiency and conservation initiatives such as education programmes in schools, and a Warm Homes programme.

The North Canterbury/Kaikoura region is one of the fastest growing in New Zealand. The quantity of electricity delivered across MainPower's network has increased by more than 60% in the past decade, driving significant investment in new infrastructure and system reinforcement.

Orion New Zealand Ltd

Orion New Zealand Ltd owns and operates the electricity network in central Canterbury between the Waimakariri and Rakaia rivers and from the Canterbury coast to Arthur's Pass.

Their network covers 8,000 square kilometres of diverse geography, including Christchurch city, Banks Peninsula, farming communities and high country. Orion transports electricity to more than 186,000 homes and businesses.



Partnership Health Canterbury

Partnership Health Canterbury – Te Kei o Te Waka strives to improve the health of all its enrolled communities in Canterbury by supporting the delivery of high quality primary health care, promoting good health to stop people getting ill and working hard to ensure everyone is accessing primary health care when they need it.

Partnership Health Canterbury is the largest Partnership Health Organisation in New Zealand. Its enrolled population accounts for most of Christchurch, all of Selwyn district and Lyttelton.

The organisation works with its communities and more than 100 general practices and other primary care providers to improve the health and well-being of the people enrolled.

Community Energy Action

Community Energy Action (CEA) is a charitable trust that provides energy efficiency services for people on low incomes. CEA aims to eliminate cold, damp and poorly insulated houses in Christchurch, to enable people to enjoy warmer and healthier living conditions.

Through its broader research, facilitation, projects and commercial activities, CEA also works with the wider community to provide practical and appropriate energy solutions.

Other organisations involved beyond 2008/09:

Christchurch City Council

The Christchurch City Council is the local authority for Christchurch, providing essential services and planning for the future based on the needs of the community.

The Council provides a wide range of services and facilities that include roads, water, rubbish collection, swimming pools, the Christchurch Art Gallery, parks and the Botanic Gardens, as well as community events. It also funds some services that are provided by other organisations or companies.

Under the Council's City Plan, introduced in 1995, some 45,226 hectares are under Council jurisdiction, of which just over one third is zoned urban and the remainder zoned rural.

Environment Canterbury

Environment Canterbury is the promotional name for the Canterbury Regional Council. The main role of the council is the promotion of sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

Its purpose is to achieve a sustainable environment, protect the community from disaster and natural hazards, and ensure safe and efficient movement of people and goods for the benefit of people, communities and future generations.

Meridian Energy

Meridian Energy is New Zealand's largest electricity generator, supplying electricity to over 180,000 residential, business and rural customers throughout the country.

Their electricity is generated from renewable resources. The company currently operates nine hydro stations in the South Island, two wind farms in Manuwatu and Mossburn, and a wind turbine in Wellington.

Warm Families: key people

Mike Underhill – Chief Executive, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority

Mike Underhill is Chief Executive of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA). Prior to this role he was Chief Executive of WEL Networks, and has spent many years in the gas and electricity sector in New Zealand and overseas.

Mr Underhill has a Bachelor's degree in engineering, a Master's degree in economics, has completed the Advanced Management Program at Harvard and is a Fellow of the Institution of Professional Engineers.



Jane Cartwright – Chief Executive, Partnership Health Canterbury

Jane Cartwright is the Chief Executive Officer of New Zealand's largest Primary Health Organisation (PHO), Partnership Health Canterbury.

Ms Cartwright is a registered dietician and holds an MBA from the University of Otago. Before joining Partnership Health Canterbury in January 2008, she held the role of Strategy Support Manager for the Christchurch City Council. In this role, Ms Cartwright worked on the development of the city's community outcomes and on strategy and policy development.

Prior to this Ms Cartwright held numerous senior roles in the health system, including General Manager for Healthlink South and Planning Manager for the Canterbury District Health Board.



Allan Berge – Group Managing Director, MainPower

Allan Berge is Group Managing Director of MainPower and is chairman of MainPower's subsidiary companies. He joined MainPower in 1987 as General Manager and became Chief Executive and Group Managing Director following corporatisation in 1993.

Mr Berge holds directorships on the boards of MainPower Contracting Ltd, Electro Services (NZ) Ltd, VirCom Energy Management Services Ltd, Tasman Electrical Ltd, and Selwyn Plantation Board Ltd.

He is also a member of the College of Chartered Accountants (CA) of the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants and a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Management (FNZIM). Prior to his current position with MainPower, Mr Berge held the role of Deputy General Manager with Electricity Ashburton, and has also held other senior roles in industry and commerce.



Roger Sutton – Chief Executive Officer, Orion New Zealand Ltd

Roger Sutton is Chief Executive Officer of Orion New Zealand Ltd. Mr Sutton has worked in the energy industry for more than 20 years and has extensive experience at general management level, including managing operational and strategic development projects in the New Zealand energy industry.

He has served on a number of government industry groups including the New Zealand Energy Market rules committee, and market rules structure groups in the late 1990s.

Mr Sutton is chairman of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority and a director of a number of other energy-related organisations and businesses. He is also chairman of Connetics, Orion's wholly-owned subsidiary which constructs and maintains substations, overhead and underground lines and associated equipment.



Bede Martin – Chief Executive, Community Energy Action

Bede Martin, Chief Executive of Community Energy Action Charitable Trust (CEA) since 2004, has management experience in state and non-government organisations.

His work in the state sector included the delivery of social services in Christchurch and Rangiora, and a role on the West Coast where he was Director of Social Welfare for eight years. He then returned to Christchurch where he managed Canterbury Community Law and then spent a short period as southern regional manager for a national social work service.

During his time at CEA, Mr Martin has overseen significant growth in work volume, increased funder contributions to support various projects for elderly and children, driven an upgrade of CEA's website, and facilitated a national workshop on fuel poverty.



Dr Alistair Humphrey – Medical Officer of Health for Canterbury, Canterbury District Health Board

Dr Alistair Humphrey is Medical Officer of Health for Canterbury. He is also the Public Health Physician attached to the "Healthy Physical Environments" programme area for the Community and Public Health division of Canterbury District Health Board.

Dr Humphrey is one of the few Public Health Physicians in New Zealand also vocationally registered in general practice, and continues to see patients in this capacity on a weekly basis. He holds postgraduate qualifications from Monash University and the University of Otago where he is an honorary senior lecturer.

A graduate of St Andrews University in Scotland, Dr Humphrey has previously worked for the International Diabetes Institute in Melbourne and the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Broken Hill, Australia.



Dr Mike Epton – Respiratory Physician, Christchurch Hospital

Dr Mike Epton is Senior Lecturer in Medicine at Christchurch School of Medicine, and is a Respiratory Physician at Christchurch Hospital. He has a research interest in asthma, COPD, breath testing, and the effects of climate and air pollution on respiratory health.

Dr Epton is currently working with a team from the Geography Department of the University of Canterbury, looking at computer modelling approaches to predicting when and where people might be affected by weather and air pollution. This approach might allow better targeting of interventions in the community to prevent illness and hospital admission.

